

King Son Says LBJ in on Conspiracy

Government set up rights leader's death, he asserts

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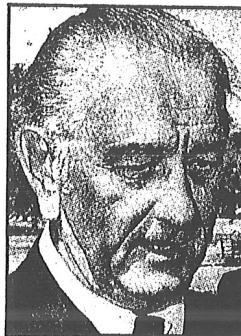
Three months ago, Dexter Scott King declared that he and his family believed that James Earl Ray was not guilty of the murder of his father, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Last night, in a televised interview, King asserted that President Lyndon B. Johnson must have been part of a military and governmental conspiracy to kill Rev. King.

"Based on the evidence that I've been shown, I would think that it would be very difficult for something of that magnitude to occur on his watch and he not be privy to it," King said on the ABC News program "Turning Point," according to a transcript of the interview.

King, who heads the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-violent Social Change in Atlanta, said the Army and federal intelligence agencies were involved in his father's assassination in Mem-



Dexter King



Lyndon Johnson



Martin Luther King

phis on April 4, 1968.

"I am told that it was part and parcel Army intelligence, CIA, FBI," he said in the interview. "I think we knew it all along."

His older brother, Martin Luther King III, said in the television interview that Ray had "basically nothing to do with this assassination."

Ray, 69, is dying of liver disease in a state prison hospital in Nashville. He originally confessed to the killing and was sentenced to life in prison. Several days later, he recanted, saying his lawyers had encouraged him to plead guilty to avoid the death penalty.

A congressional inquiry and studies by several historians have

concluded that Ray was almost certainly involved in the killing, although others may have played a part in a conspiracy.

The notion of a conspiracy by the Army and intelligence agencies to kill Rev. King has long been expounded by William Pepper, Ray's lawyer, who is seeking a trial for his client. In recent months, Dexter King, his three siblings and their mother, Coretta Scott King, have apparently embraced Pepper's theories.

In the broadcast, Forrest Sawyer of ABC undermined at least part of Pepper's theory by introducing Pepper to Billy Eidson. Eidson is a retired Army officer whom Pepper has characterized as the leader of a unit that was prepared to kill Rev. King if the

assassin did not succeed. Pepper has said that Eidson was himself later assassinated. After being presented with Eidson, Pepper said, "I acknowledge that maybe I was provided with wrong information."

In March, Dexter King traveled to Nashville to meet with Ray and told him face-to-face that he and his family believed Ray's declarations of innocence.

With the King family's support, Pepper has won court approval for new ballistics tests on the rifle linked to Ray and the killing of Rev. King. Pepper hopes that new forensic methods will prove that the rifle did not fire the fatal shot. The tests have been completed, but a hearing has yet to be held on the results.

In the ABC program, Mrs. King and Andrew Young, formerly a top aide to Rev. King as well as the chief delegate to the United Nations and the mayor of Atlanta, called on President Clinton to appoint a commission to investigate the killing again. Mrs. King proposed that anyone with information about the assassination be granted amnesty.

Neither Young nor any members of the King family could be reached for comment yesterday.